

# Metabolic plasticity of HIV-specific CD8+ T cells is associated with enhanced antiviral potential and natural control of HIV-1 infection

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# 26 ABSTRACT

27 Spontaneous control of HIV is generally associated with an enhanced capacity of CD8+ T-cells to 28 eliminate infected CD4+ T-cells, but the molecular characteristics of these highly functional CD8+ T-29 cells are largely unknown. Here, using single-cell analysis, we show that HIV-specific central memory 30 CD8+ T-cells from spontaneous HIV controllers (HIC) and antiretroviral-treated non-controllers have 31 opposing transcriptomic profiles. Genes linked to effector functions and survival are upregulated in 32 cells from HIC. In contrast, genes associated with activation, exhaustion and glycolysis are 33 upregulated in cells from non-controllers. We show that HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from non-34 controllers are largely glucose-dependent, while those from HIC have more diverse metabolic 35 resources that enhance both their survival potential and their capacity to develop anti-HIV effector 36 functions. The functional efficiency of the HIV-specific CD8+ T-cell response in HIC is thus engraved in 37 their memory population and related to their metabolic program. Metabolic reprogramming in vitro 38 through IL-15 treatment abrogated the glucose dependency and enhanced the antiviral potency of 39 HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from non-controllers.

## 42 INTRODUCTION

43 HIV-1-specific CD8+ T-cells develop promptly following HIV-1 infection and contribute to limiting 44 viremia. However, they do not fully control the virus and their functions weaken further during 45 chronic infection<sup>1</sup>. When compared to CD8+ T-cells elicited by other pathogens, HIV-specific CD8+ Tcells show delayed maturation and limited effector potential<sup>2,3</sup>. However, HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells 46 endued with enhanced proliferative capacity<sup>4</sup>, polyfunctionality<sup>5</sup> and cytotoxicity<sup>6</sup> have been 47 48 described in rare individuals (HIV controllers, HIC) who maintain the virus below the detection limit 49 without antiretroviral therapy<sup>7</sup>. HLA B\*27 and B\*57 are over-represented among HIC, further 50 supporting a role of CD8+ T-cells in HIV control. Natural control of HIV infection is also usually 51 associated with an ability of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells to efficiently eliminate HIV-infected autologous CD4+ T-cells ex vivo<sup>8</sup>. Similar activity can also be found in HIV-2-controllers<sup>9</sup>, but not during the acute 52 or chronic stage of HIV-1 infection in individuals who do not control infection<sup>10,11</sup>. Superior virus-53 54 inhibiting activity has been attributed to all memory CD8+ T-cell subsets from HIC<sup>12</sup>, pointing to 55 intrinsic differences between cells from controllers and non-controllers.

56

57 Here we aimed to identify inherent differences between HIV-specific CD8 from HIC and those from 58 HIV non-controllers with suppressed viremia on antiretroviral treatment (cART). We focused the 59 analysis on central memory CD8+ T (CD8+ TCM)-cells, which represent an intermediate state 60 between naïve and effector CD8+ T-cells and are responsible for long-term immune memory 61 responses<sup>13</sup>. We postulated that any intrinsic differences between cells from HIC and non-controllers 62 should be already imprinted in the CD8+ TCM subset. HIV-infected individuals with low virus setpoints have significantly larger numbers of CD8+ TCM<sup>14</sup>, while HIV disease progression is associated 63 64 with shorter CD8+ TCM lifespans and numbers<sup>15</sup>, highlighting their role in HIV control. However, CD8+ TCM cells are heterogeneous and have variable potential for proliferation and differentiation<sup>16</sup>. 65

We conducted single-cell gene expression analyses, as this approach is well-adapted to identify differences between cells that have the same phenotype in methods such as conventional flow cytometry<sup>17</sup>. We found that HIV-specific CD8+ TCM cells from HIC and non-controllers had distinct transcriptional signatures. Our findings reveal that metabolic plasticity is an important characteristic of efficient HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells that better equipped them to survive and to counteract the virus. We demonstrate that metabolic reprogramming in vitro of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from noncontrollers enhanced their antiviral potency.

74

# 77 **RESULTS**

# 78 Strong anti-HIV potential of HIC central memory CD8+ T-cells

79 CD8+ T-cells with a strong capacity to suppress HIV infection of autologous CD4+ T-cells ex vivo can be isolated from HIC but not from cART individuals<sup>8,10,18</sup> (Figure 1A). Here, we first investigated 80 81 whether this capacity of HIC CD8+ T-cells could be found among naïve, central memory, transitional 82 memory and effector memory CD8+ T-cell subsets (Supplementary Figure 1). As expected, naïve 83 CD8+ T-cells from HIC had no HIV-suppressive capacity. In contrast, all sorted memory CD8+ T-cell 84 subsets from HIC, but not from cART individuals, suppressed HIV infection as efficiently as bulk CD8+ 85 T-cells (Figure 1B). Therefore, although effector memory cells likely had more immediate anti-viral 86 capacity<sup>12</sup>, HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC can efficiently react to counteract HIV-1 infection 87 during the co-culture. These results support the view that the strong antiviral potential of HIC is 88 already embedded in the program of their HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells.

89

# 90 Distinct gene expression profile in HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC

91 We then compared the single-cell gene expression profiles (96 genes associated with CD8+ T-cell 92 function, differentiation, metabolism and survival (Supplementary Figure 2, Supplementary Data 1)) 93 of HIV-specific CD8+ TCM cells from five HIC whose CD8+ T-cells had strong HIV-suppressive capacity 94 and from five cART individuals (Supplementary Table 1). Cells from cART and HIC analyzed here 95 shared not only the same differentiation status but also the same activation phenotype, as defined 96 by flow cytometry (Figure 1C, Supplementary Table 2). Despite their similar phenotype, t-sne (t-97 distributed stochastic neighbor embedding algorithm) based analysis showed that HIC and cART cells 98 had distinct gene expression profiles (Figure 1D), with stronger group differences between cells from 99 HIC and cART than differences among cells from individuals in each group (p=0.003 for inter-group vs 100 intra-group variance).

#### 102 Upregulation of antiviral genes in HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC

103 Next, we analyzed the genes differently expressed in HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC and cART 104 individuals. At the single-cell level, gene expression is not continuous but occurs in pulses, with 105 periods of inactivity<sup>-</sup>. We therefore analyzed our data using MAST (Model-based Analysis of Single 106 Cell Transcriptomics), which identified differently expressed genes (i) considering only the expressed 107 genes (continuous, e.g. differences in mRNA expression levels); (ii) considering expressed vs non-108 expressed genes (discrete, i.e. differences in the frequency of cell expressing or not that gene); (iii) 109 combining the discrete and continuous parts of the model (hurdle).

110

111 Overall, differences between cells from HIC and cART individuals were found for 38 genes (23 genes 112 in the continuous analysis, 21 in the discrete analyses; 33 genes were found in the hurdle analysis; 113 Supplementary Figures 3 and 4, Supplementary table 3). Ten genes relating to CD8+ T-cell effector 114 activities were found to be more frequently active and/or expressed at higher levels in HIV-specific 115 CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC than in those from cART (Figure 2). These genes included beta-chemokines 116 (CCL3, CCL3L1 and XCL1), which interfere with HIV-1 infection<sup>19</sup>; granzymes (GZMB, GZMK), which are major mediators of CD8+ T-cell antiviral cytotoxic activities<sup>6</sup>; and other molecules involved in CD8+ T-117 118 cell-induced apoptosis, such as Fas ligand (FASL), tumor necrosis factor (TNF) and TNF-related 119 apoptosis-inducing ligand (TRAIL/TNFSF10). Intriguingly, although CD8+ T-cells are not considered to 120 be major producers of type-I interferon, we found that cells from HIC expressed IFNB transcripts at 121 higher levels than cells from cART. Only PRF1 showed higher expression in cells from cART 122 individuals. These results show that HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells are endowed with massive antiviral 123 potential, in keeping with our demonstration that CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC efficiently suppress HIV 124 infection ex vivo.

125

#### 126 Upregulation of cell survival genes in HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC

127 We then analyzed the nature of the other 28 genes differently expressed in cells from HIC and cART 128 (see Supplementary figure 5 for not differently expressed genes). Cells from cART more frequently 129 expressed genes linked to activation (CD69, KLRD1) than cells from HIC (Figure 3A), despite similar 130 surface expression of HLA-DR and CD38 (Figure 1C, Supplementary Table 2). Cells from cART also 131 expressed CD8A mRNA and the inhibitory regulators LAG-3 and CDKN1B, more frequently and/or at 132 higher levels (Figure 3A), in line with their more highly activated profile. Cells from cART also more 133 frequently expressed interferon-stimulated genes (MX1, OAS1) and HIF1A, a gene linked to the mTOR 134 pathway and glycolysis<sup>20</sup> (Figure 3A). Overall, the profile of cells from cART individuals was compatible with activation of mTORC1<sup>20,21</sup>, which regulates cellular metabolism, and particularly 135 136 anaerobic glycolysis, to keep up with energy requirements upon activation $^{22}$ .

137

138 In contrast, cells from HIC expressed more frequently or at higher levels several key genes of the 139 mTORC2 pathway (RICTOR, CDC42, RHOA) (Figure 3B), which has been linked to cell survival<sup>23</sup>. 140 Indeed, cells from HIC also upregulated genes directly associated with cell survival and resistance to 141 apoptosis (IL7R, BCL2, EOMES, ID2) (Figure 3B). Interestingly, HIC cells expressed higher levels of VHL (Figure 3B), which targets HIF-1 for proteasomal degradation<sup>24</sup> and counteracts HIF-1-mediated 142 upregulation of glycolysis in CD8+ T-cells<sup>25</sup>. Thus, HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC not only 143 144 expressed lower levels of HIF1A when compared to cART cells, but were also set to actively counter 145 this factor. Cells from HIC also expressed higher levels of REPIN1, which is involved in metabolic regulation and downregulation of glucose transport<sup>26</sup>. Overall, these results suggest that HIV-specific 146 147 CD8 TCM-cells from cART individuals are primed for activation and glycolysis, while cells from HIC are 148 rather primed for survival through the mTORC2 pathway.

149

# $150 \qquad \text{Effector function and survival genes are co-expressed in HIC cells}$

We explored whether differently expressed genes between HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC
 and cART individuals were inter-related, i.e. whether their respective expression profiles coincided in

153 individual cells. Although heterogeneity was observed, cells from HIC and cART segregated with 154 opposing profiles (Figure 4): cells expressing the highest levels of effector function-related genes (e.g. 155 GZMB, CCL3, FASL, TNF, IFNB1) also expressed high levels of genes associated with cell survival (ILTR, 156 BCL-2, ID2) and were almost exclusively found in HIC. Moreover, these cells expressed relatively low 157 levels of CD8A, CD69, LAG3, KLRD1 and HIF1A, which were strongly expressed by cells from cART 158 individuals (Figure 4A,B). These profiles support that HIC are characterized by the presence of HIV-159 specific CD8+ TCM-cells with high antiviral potential concomitantly primed for survival, while cART's 160 cells have limited antiviral potential and exhibit upregulation of genes linked to glycolysis, 161 senescence and exhaustion.

162

# 163 Shared gene expression profile in cells from HIC with strong and weak responses

164 Although most HIC have HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells that efficiently suppress the virus (strong 165 responders, SR), some have weak CD8+ T-cell responses that fail to suppress HIV ex vivo (weak 166 responders, WR)<sup>18</sup>. The differences between SR and WR cannot be explained by different HLA 167 backgrounds, because the protective HLA B alleles are equally overrepresented in the two 168 subgroups<sup>27</sup>. CD8+ T-cells from WR can recover their virus-suppressing capacity upon stimulated 169 expansion<sup>28</sup>. We thus wondered whether HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from WR and SR have the 170 same transcription profile. We studied HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from five WR (Supplementary 171 Table 1) and found that their gene expression profile was intermediate between the SR and cART 172 cells analyzed before (Figure 5A, Supplementary Table 4), although closer to that of SR. In particular, 173 HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from both WR and SR expressed higher levels of genes related to 174 effector function (CCL3L1, GZMB, IFNB, TNF) (Figure 5B) (although less broadly for WR 175 (Supplementary Figure 6)), and survival (ILTR, PRKCA, ID2) (Figure 5C) compared to cells from cART. 176 As previously observed, cells from cART showed upregulation of genes linked to 177 mTORC1/activation/glycolysis (CD8A, HIF1A, KLRD1, CD69, IRF1) and LAG3 inhibitory receptor (Figure

178 5D) than both SR and WR. These data imply that HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC SR and WR

179 share a close transcriptome program despite their different functional activities *ex vivo*.

180

# 181 Different metabolite uptake by CD8+ TCM cells from HIC and non-controllers

182 We then explored if the changes in the transcriptional program of HIV-specific CD8+ TCM cells from 183 HIC and cART individuals translated in differences at the protein and functional level. We observed 184 that, although not statistically significant, HIC tended to carry more frequently cells with high levels 185 of GRZB than cART individuals (Figure 6A). HIF1 was more strongly expressed in HIV-specific CD8+ 186 TCM-cells from cART individuals than in cells from HIC (figure 6A), strengthening our observations 187 that mTORC1 and glycolysis were particularly upregulated in the cells from non-controllers<sup>20</sup>. As 188 discussed above, cells from HIC showed upregulation of VHL and REPIN1 (Figures 3B, 4) which may downplay glycolysis by counteracting HIF1A and decreasing glucose transport<sup>24,26</sup>. This implies 189 190 different regulation of CD8+ T-cell metabolism in the two groups of individuals. The metabolic 191 activity of cells is tightly linked to their function. Activated effector cells preferentially upregulate 192 glycolysis to meet the energy demands imposed by T-cell proliferation, while memory cells rely on fatty acid oxidation to fuel mitochondrial oxidative phosphorylation and persist<sup>29</sup>. CD8+ TCM-cells 193 194 from HIC exhibited ex vivo significantly higher fatty acid uptake than those from cART, whereas there 195 was no significant difference in glucose uptake (Figure 6B). In consequence, CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC 196 had a higher fatty acid/glucose uptake ratio than cells from cART individuals (Figure 6B).

197

# 198 Glucose dependency of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from non-controllers.

The above results suggest that HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from cART individuals might be more glucose-dependent than cells from HIC. We tested the capacity of CD8+ T-cells from HIC and cART (Supplementary Table 5) to react against a pool of HIV-1 Gag peptides in the presence and absence of glucose. We found that both TNF- $\alpha$  secretion and the overall magnitude of the HIV-specific CD8+ Tcell response (Figure 7A, 7C) from both the HIC and cART groups were significantly diminished in the

204 absence of glucose. However, the HIV-specific CD8+ T-cell response from cART was more strongly 205 impacted and barely detectable or undetectable without glucose (Figure 7A, 7C). In contrast, CMV-206 specific CD8+ T-cell responses from cART were not significantly impacted by glucose deprivation 207 (Supplementary Figure 8). The viability of CD8+ T-cells from HIC and cART individuals also decreased 208 in the absence of glucose, but cells from cART individuals again tended to be more strongly affected 209 (Supplementary Figure 9). These functional tests support our gene expression results demonstrating 210 that HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from cART individuals are dependent predominantly on glucose in 211 contrast to HIC.

212

213 We wondered if the detected profiles on blood cells were representative of tissue cells. We therefore 214 analyzed the impact of glucose deprivation on SIV-specific CD8+ T-cell responses from lymphoid 215 tissues of macaques spontaneously controlling SIVmac251 infection (SIV controllers, SIC) or not 216 controlling (viremic, VIR) (Supplementary Figure 10A). In line with what we described for HIV-217 infected individuals, blood and splenic CD8+ T-cells from SIC, but not from viremic animals, had a 218 strong capacity ex vivo to suppress SIV infection of autologous CD4+ T-cells (Supplementary Figure 219 10B). The splenic SIV-specific CD8+ T-cell response from SIC was not significantly affected by the 220 absence of glucose, while it strongly decreased in conditions of glucose deprivation for viremic 221 animals (Supplementary Figure 10C). These results confirm that strong glucose dependency is an 222 inherent characteristic of the less efficient CD8+ T-cells found in non-controller subjects.

223

# 224 Metabolic plasticity of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from HIC

Since HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from HIC still responded despite glucose deprivation, our data suggest that they mobilize additional energetic resources. We also noted a trend toward larger mitochondrial mass in cells from cART individuals (Supplementary Figure 11), a feature that has been linked to mitochondrial dysfunction in senescent CD8+ T-cells<sup>30</sup> and exhausted HBV-specific CD8+ T-cells<sup>31</sup>. We wondered if cells from HIC and cART might differ with respect to their mitochondrial function. We found that menadione, a drug that alters mitochondrial membrane polarization<sup>32</sup>, significantly reduced TNF- $\alpha$  and IFN- $\gamma$  secretion and diminished the overall response of CD8+ T-cells from HIC but not cART individuals (Figure 7A, C, Supplementary Figure 12). Altogether, cells from HIC, in contrast to cells from cART, appear to rely on mitochondrial function to fuel their anti-HIV CD8+ T-cell responses in addition to glycolysis.

235

We found that metabolic plasticity was important for sustaining qualitative differences between 236 237 CD8+ T-cells from HIC and non controllers. The polyfunctionality of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from HIC 238 was higher than that of cells from cART individuals in control conditions, in accordance with previous 239 reports<sup>5</sup>. The percentage of highly polyfunctional cells in HIC (3 or 4 functions) was not significantly 240 altered in the absence of glucose (Figure 7B, 7C), but decreased significantly in the presence of 241 menadione (Figure 7B, 7C). No significant changes were observed in the polyfunctionality of HIV-242 specific CD8+ T-cells from cART individuals in the absence of glucose or the presence of menadione. 243 Highly polyfunctional cells were only observed in two cART individuals at very low frequencies, and 244 they were still detectable in the absence of glucose but could not be detected in the presence of 245 menadione. Thus, the polyfunctionality of CD8+ T-cells appeared to depend on mitochondrial 246 function rather than on glycolysis, which suggests that not all CD8+ T-cell functions are equally 247 controlled by the same metabolic pathways.

248

To further explore this possibility, we analyzed phosphorylation of ribosomal S6 (pS6) and AKT (pAKT) proteins, as markers, respectively, of engagement of mTORC1 and mTORC2 pathways, in CD8+ T-cells from HIC producing IFNγ or TNFα upon stimulation with HIV-1 Gag peptides. Interestingly, while IFNγ+ HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells were characterized by high levels of pS6 and low levels of pAKT (Supplementary Figure 13), the cells producing TNFα showed both high levels of pAKT and pS6, although not necessarily simultaneously (Supplementary Figure 13). Therefore, our results indicate that while IFNγ production, one of the last function to be lost in exhausted HIV-specific CD8+ T-

256 cells<sup>33</sup>, is regulated by mTORC1, polyfunctionality might depend on mTORC2. Moreover, mTORC1 did 257 not appear critical for CD8+ T-cells from HIC during our HIV/SIV-suppression assay. Rapamycin 258 treatment during the suppression assay decreased the infection levels of isolated CD4+ T-cells 259 (Supplementary Figure 14A), further showing that metabolic activities (and the mTORC1 pathway in particular) are critical for the establishment of HIV/SIV infection in CD4+ T-cells<sup>34,35</sup>. However, 260 261 rapamycin did not abolish the capacity of CD8+ T-cells from HIV or SIV controllers to suppress 262 infection (Supplementary Figure 14A). We could analyze oxidative phosphorylation and glycolysis in 263 purified CD8+ T-cells from a limited number of HIC (n=3) and cART individuals (n=2) after co-culture 264 with non-infected or HIV pre-infected autologous CD4+ T-cells. No differences in cell metabolism 265 were observed between the CD8+ T-cells from cART individuals whether they had been cultured with 266 infected or non-infected cells. In contrast, CD8+ T-cells from HIC cultured in presence of infected CD4 267 T-cells showed enhanced metabolic activities, and in particular oxidative phosphorylation when 268 compared to CD8+ T-cells that had been cultured in presence of non-infected cells (Supplementary 269 Figure 14B), suggesting that CD8+ T-cells from HIC mobilized different metabolic resources in 270 presence of HIV infected CD4+ T-cells.

271

272 Our results globally indicate that the functions more commonly associated with efficient HIV-specific 273 CD8+ T-cell responses in controllers (polyfunctionality, viral suppression capacity) are sustained by 274 the mTORC2 pathway and rely on both glucose and oxidative phosphorylation, while cells from cART 275 rely mostly on glucose metabolism. They strongly suggest that metabolic plasticity is a critical 276 characteristic of highly efficient CD8+ T-cells.

277

#### 278 IL-15 reinvigorates HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from non-controllers

IL-15 promotes fatty acid oxidation and mitochondrial biogenesis in CD8+ T-cells<sup>29</sup>. Accordingly, we
found that IL-15 pre-treatment enhanced the rates of fatty acid uptake and the basal metabolic
activities and maximal mitochondrial respiratory capacity of bulk CD8+ T-cells from cART individuals

282 (Figure 8A and B). IL-15 increased the frequency of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cell responses in cART but it 283 did not alter the frequency of CMV-specific CD8+ T-cells in the same individuals (Figure 8C). 284 Importantly, IL-15 pre-treatment also strongly enhanced the capacity of CD8+ T-cells from cART 285 individuals to suppress HIV infection (Figure 8D). IL-15 pre-treatment was also able to increase the 286 SIV-CD8+ T-cell response in lymphoid tissues of SIV viremic animals, abrogated their glucose 287 dependency (Supplementary Figure 10C) and strongly increased their capacity to suppress SIV 288 infection of CD4+ T-cells (Supplementary Figure 10D). These results show that metabolic 289 reprogramming rescues HIV/SIV-specific CD8+ T-cell responses in non-controller individuals and 290 further confirm that metabolic plasticity is a critical element in the efficacy of the HIV-specific CD8+ 291 T-cell response.

### 294 **DISCUSSION**

295 Durable natural HIV control has been linked to the presence of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells with 296 enhanced capacities in functional assays *in vitro*<sup>8</sup>. We show here that the superior antiviral potential 297 of CD8+ T-cells from HIC is engraved in the transcriptional program of the central memory 298 population. When compared to cells from non-controllers, CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC exhibited 299 upregulation of a broad range of genes linked to effector functions, indicating that differences 300 between HIC and cART HIV-specific CD8+ T-cell responses are related to different memory-cell 301 programs rather than to the accumulation of flaws in non-controllers' effector cells. Cells from HIC 302 upregulated genes linked to survival, while cells from non-controllers upregulated genes associated 303 with mTORC1 activation and glycolysis. Functional analyses showed that HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells 304 from HIC had metabolic plasticity while cells from non-controllers had a strong dependency on 305 glycolysis, and similar results were obtained in tissues from a non-human primate model of durable 306 SIVmac251 control. Pre-treatment with IL-15 reinvigorated HIV/SIV-specific CD8+ T-cell responses in 307 non-controllers, ablating their dependency on glucose and enhancing their capacity to suppress 308 infection.

309

310 Our results show that HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from controllers are equipped with a large panel of 311 mechanisms to counteract HIV infection, including soluble antiviral factors and direct cytotoxic 312 activities. The different expression of T-cell "function" genes between HIC and cART was 313 accompanied by different expression of other sets of genes indicating the preferential activation of 314 mTORC1 in cART individuals and mTORC2 in HIC. mTORC1 and mTORC2 play distinct roles in CD8+ Tcell differentiation. mTORC1 is generally associated with the induction of glycolysis and the 315 316 generation of effector cells, while mTORC2 is linked to the regulation of T-cell memory functions<sup>22</sup>. 317 Expression of genes associated with mTORC1 in HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from cART individuals 318 points to a skewed priming of these cells. On the other hand, strong expression of effector-linked 319 genes in cells from HIC was accompanied by very weak expression of mTORC1-linked genes. We 320 show here that production of IFN- $\gamma$  and TNF $\alpha$  by HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from HIC were associated 321 with different engagement of mTORC1 and mTORC2. Moreover, mTORC1 blocking with rapamycin 322 did not diminish the capacity of CD8+ T-cells from controllers to suppress infection. It is still unclear 323 which processes are controlled by mTORC1 during effector functioning and, although mTORC1 324 activation appears necessary for IFN- $\gamma$  production, our results are in agreement with previous reports 325 indicating that this pathway may not have a global impact on cytokine production<sup>36</sup>.

326

327 HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells from HIC also exhibited upregulation of genes linked to survival, while 328 cells from cART rather had a pro-apoptotic signature. Susceptibility of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells to apoptosis is well documented in non-controllers<sup>2,37</sup>. Effector memory CD8+ T-cells isolated from HIC 329 330 are preserved after prolonged culture, while HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from non-controllers are 331 gradually lost in the same conditions<sup>38</sup>. Indeed, it is possible that the enhanced capacity of CD8+ T-332 cells from HIC to suppress HIV infection results from the combination of higher cytotoxic potential on 333 a per-cell basis<sup>6</sup> and enhanced survival of the cells in absence of cytokines as required in the 334 suppression assay prior to the co-culture<sup>8</sup>. Overall, our results indicate that HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells 335 from HIC are better equipped to survive, including in conditions of metabolic stress, which may be an 336 indication of enhanced stemness of these cells<sup>39</sup>.

337

Our results support the notion that differences in the functionality of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from HIC and non-controllers are imprinted in the program of their memory cells. While exhaustion is typically associated with effector T-cells having a very limited capacity to establish persistent memory<sup>40</sup>, HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from the cART individuals studied here were characterized by a profile reminiscent of exhausted cells, including the concomitant upregulation of genes encoding several inhibitory receptors (e.g. *LAG3, KLRD1*), despite their central memory phenotype. This

supports the notion that exhausted CD8+ T-cells may represent a distinct subset of cells that have
 received specific differentiation priming<sup>41</sup>.

346

HIV-specific CD8+ CM T-cells from HIC patients classified as strong or weak responders in terms of the direct antiviral activity of their CD8+ T-cells *ex vivo*<sup>18</sup> shared many features and similarly differ of cells from non-controllers. When compared to SR HIC, WR HIC generally had lower ultrasensitive viral load<sup>27</sup> and a lower frequency of infected cells with reactivable virus<sup>42</sup>, and likely constitute a subgroup of HIC who have achieved tighter control of the infection. Accordingly, our results show that the responses of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from SR and WR receive similar priming, although the profile of cells from WR HIC reflects a longer period of quiescence<sup>18</sup>.

354

One possible limitation to our single cell analyses is that, due to sample availability, not all sorted CM cells had the same HIV antigen specificity, which might have some impact on their molecular program. However single cells from HIC and ART individuals showed a compelling segregation. Moreover, the direct comparison of cells from subjects HIC 01001 and ART 630104, which were sorted with the same dextramer (A03 Gag 020-028), recapitulated many of the differences that were found in the global analysis (Supplementary Figure 15), confirming that main differences between cells from HIC and ART were not related to epitope specificity.

362

Our findings suggest that the survival and functional advantages of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from HIC might be related to their greater metabolic plasticity. Indeed, CD8+ T-cells from HIC were only partially affected by glucose deprivation, while cells from cART were highly glucose-dependent. Importantly, the same difference in glucose dependency was found with SIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from spleen samples of SIV controllers and viremic macaques that strongly differed in their capacity to suppress SIV infection *ex vivo*. This further supports that strict glucose dependency is associated with inefficient HIV/SIV-specific CD8+ T-cells in blood and tissues. Glucose-dependency was observed

370 for HIV-specific CD8+ T responses from cART individuals but not for CMV-specific CD8+ T-cells, which 371 is in agreement with skewed priming exclusively of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells rather than a general 372 characteristic of the CD8+ T-cells in these individuals. The glucose dependency of HIV-specific CD8+ 373 T-cells from non-controllers appeared to be associated with dysfunctional (or uncommitted) 374 mitochondria, which could deprive these cells of important metabolic resources. Increased 375 mitochondrial mass has been linked to a survival defect of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells in non 376 controllers<sup>43</sup>, in line with our results. Low mitochondrial membrane potential and high oxidative 377 stress in lymphocytes have also been positively correlated with viral load in untreated HIV-1 378 infection<sup>44</sup>, further supporting the idea that mitochondria dysfunction can negatively impact viral 379 control. Although mitochondrial metabolism is important for the persistence of CD8+ T-cell memory, recent reports indicate that it is not indispensable for memory development<sup>45</sup>. Interestingly, VHL 380 381 deficiency in CD8+ T-cells increases constitutive levels of HIF1 and glycolytic activity favoring the 382 development of effector memory responses<sup>46</sup>. Although these cells were able to counteract LCMV 383 infection in mice<sup>25</sup>, VHL deficiency impaired the formation of terminally differentiated cells. In 384 contrast, VHL-sufficiency in the same model was characterized by the development of central memory responses with increased mitochondrial respiratory capacity<sup>46</sup>, which may be critical in the 385 386 long-term. These results are coherent with our observation that HIV-specific CD8+ T CM cells from 387 HIC and cART individuals were characterized by contrasting differential expression of VHL 388 (upregulated in HIC) and HIF1 (upregulated in cART individuals). The magnitude and polyfunctionality 389 of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from HIC was reduced in the presence of menadione, a drug that alters 390 mitochondrial membrane polarization<sup>32</sup>. Menadione can also perturb mitochondrial calcium homeostasis<sup>32</sup>, which also affects T-cell activation<sup>47</sup>. In any case, although the number of experiments 391 392 was limited, CD8+ T-cells from HIC increased oxidative phosphorylation upon contact with infected 393 CD4+ T-cells, further supporting that HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from HIC had preserved mitochondrial 394 metabolism.

395

396 This could be related to the *ID2* upregulation observed in HIC cells. ID2 has been shown to promote 397 effector differentiation and T-cell survival<sup>48</sup>, and to reduce mitochondrial damage induced by 398 oxidative stress and to increase survival in cancer cell lines deprived of glucose<sup>49</sup>. CD8+ CM T-cells 399 from HIC showed increased fatty acid uptake. This could indicate that CD8+ CM T-cells from HIC may also rely on fatty acid oxidation, which has been shown to enhance CD8+ T-cell memory generation<sup>29</sup>, 400 facilitate the secretion of several effector cytokines<sup>50</sup> and provide superior protection against 401 402 influenza virus infection<sup>51</sup>. Overall, our results imply that metabolic plasticity, as opposed to strict 403 glucose-dependency, may contribute to the enhanced antiviral capacity of natural HIV controllers' 404 CD8+ T-cells.

405

406 To avoid the impact of ongoing viral replication on our analysis, we compared cells from HIC to those 407 from HIV-1-infected individuals on cART. Some nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (NRTI) can 408 block mitochondrial DNA polymerase gamma function and induce mitochondrial dysfunction<sup>52</sup>. 409 However, not all NRTIs have the same impact on mitochondrial function and the drugs used to treat 410 the individuals whose cells were used in our functional assays are reported to have limited mitochondrial toxicity<sup>52,53</sup> (Supplementary Table 6). The increase in mitochondrial mass is a selective 411 412 characteristic of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cell responses associated with uncontrolled infection<sup>43</sup>. 413 Moreover, CMV-specific CD8+ T-cell responses from cART individuals did not show glucose 414 dependency. Therefore, impact of antiretroviral treatment does not explain the metabolic defects 415 observed in HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from cART individuals. In addition, glucose dependency was also 416 found in SIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from ART-naïve SIVmac251 infected macagues with high viremia, 417 showing that this glucose dependency was associated with inefficient HIV/SIV specific CD8+ T-cell 418 responses in subjects with active viral replication or ART-suppressed viremia.

419

421 Although glycolysis is a pivotal energy resource for CD8+ T-cell function, tight glucose dependency 422 could impose serious limitations in vivo, as already shown in cancer. Tumor cell growth and the 423 tumor microenvironment provoke nutrient restrictions and impair anti-tumoral T-cell effector 424 functions<sup>54</sup>. Similarly, in the context of HIV infection, T-cell activation and homeostasis are accompanied by an increase in T-cell glucose uptake in lymph nodes<sup>55</sup>. HIV-1-infected CD4 T-cells 425 426 have enhanced glucose uptake and glycolytic activity<sup>34</sup>. Lactic acid, the product of glycolysis, can suppress CD8+ T-cell cytotoxic functions<sup>56</sup>. The glucose dependency of CD8+ T-cells from HIV non-427 428 controllers could lead to functional impairment in this glucose-restricted microenvironment. In 429 contrast, the greater metabolic plasticity of cells from HIC would allow them to continue to exert 430 their functions, at least partially, in this setting.

431

432 Although, due to the heterogeneity of the data, the interpretation of some differences observed in 433 our study between cells from HIC and cART individuals should be considered with caution, it is worth 434 noting that another recent study showed that dysfunctional HBV-specific CD8+ T-cells are 435 characterized by GLUT1 upregulation and glucose dependency, while functional CMV-specific CD8+ T-cells are able to use oxidative phosphorylation in the absence of glucose<sup>31</sup>. In addition, 436 437 mitochondria-targeting antioxidant treatment corrected mitochondrial dysfunction and restored 438 HBV-specific T-cell functions<sup>57</sup>. This suggests that limited metabolic plasticity and glucose 439 dependency is a hallmark of dysfunctional antigen-specific CD8+ T-cells.

440

We show here that HIV/SIV-specific CD8+ T-cell responses from cART individuals or viremic macaques can be reinvigorated by IL-15 pre-treatment. IL-15 induces mitochondrial biogenesis in CD8+ T-cells, to promote the use of fatty acids for energy<sup>29</sup>, and enhances the survival and function of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells<sup>58</sup>. Our results are in agreement with these reports and indicate that these beneficial effects are interrelated. Moreover, our data show that antigen-specific CD8+ T-cells more dependent on glucose, such as HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells, benefited most of the IL-15 mediated enhancement of

447 oxidative metabolism, while the effect was mitigated in cells that were already using mitochondrial 448 respiration to sustain their activity in the absence of glucose, e.g. CMV-specific CD8+ T-cell 449 responses. Importantly, pre-incubation with IL-15 restored non-controllers' CD8+ T-cells' HIV-450 suppressive capacity *ex vivo*, as previously shown<sup>38</sup>. IL-15 immunotherapy is showing promising 451 results *in vivo* in non-human primate models<sup>59</sup>, and this may be related in part to its direct effect on 452 CD8+ T-cell function, as shown here.

453

454 Overall, our findings show that the enhanced functionality of HIV-specific CD8+ T-cells from HIC is 455 imprinted in their memory program and is associated with their ability to use diverse metabolic 456 resources. In contrast, poor functionality of cells from non-controllers is associated with dependency 457 on glycolysis as primary energy source. Our data thus highlight the molecular singularity of HIV-458 specific CD8+ T-cells from HIC, and point to a metabolic profile compatible with better cell survival 459 and a preserved potential to develop a higher quality anti-HIV effector functions in stressful 460 conditions. Our results indicating that HIV-specific CD8+ T-cell metabolism is linked to control of HIV 461 infection suggest that new pharmacological tools regulating metabolic activity, as explored in the cancer field<sup>60</sup>, could help to induce HIV remission and to develop therapeutic vaccines. 462

# 465 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

466

467 Subjects

468 The HIV controllers (HIC, individuals naïve of antiretroviral treatment and whose last 5 consecutive 469 plasma HIV RNA values were below 400 copies/ml) included in this study belonged to the ANRS CO21 470 Codex cohort. Strong responders (SR) and weak responders (WR) were defined as HIV controllers 471 whose CD8+ T-cells were able to reduce p24 production by autologous CD4+ T-cells by more and less 472 than 2 logs, respectively (see Viral Suppression Assay)<sup>27</sup>. The antiretroviral-treated HIV-infected 473 individuals (cART, antiretroviral treatment for at least 2 years, and undetectable HIV RNA) were part 474 of the ANRS PRIMO cohort or recruited from the outpatients at CHU Kremlin-Bicêtre and CHU 475 Georges Pompidou in Paris. Clinical data for the individuals studied in the single-cell gene expression 476 assays are listed in Supplementary Table 1. Clinical data for the other study participants are 477 summarized in Supplementary Table 5. All participants gave their informed consent and the study 478 was approved by ethics committee (Comité de Protection des Personnes) of Île-de-France XI.

479

#### 480 Viral Suppression Assay

481 The capacity of CD8+ T-cell to suppress HIV-1 infection was analyzed on co-cultures with autologous 482 CD4+ T-cells<sup>61</sup>. After PBMC isolation from peripheral blood by density gradient centrifugation, CD4+ 483 and CD8+ T-cells were separated by, respectively, successive positive and negative magnetic bead 484 sorting (STEMCELL Technologies). CD4+ T-cells were cultured for 3 days in complete RPMI medium in 485 the presence of phytohemagglutinin (1 µg/ml) and interleukin-2 (100 IU/ml). In parallel, CD8+ T-cells 486 were cultured in complete RPMI medium in the absence of stimuli. Activated CD4+ T-cells were infected with HIV-1 Bal by spinoculation for 2 h at 2,000  $\times$  g and 22°C<sup>62</sup> and cultured alone or with 487 488 CD8+ T-cells at a 1:1 ratio for 14 days in interleukin-2 (100 IU/ml)-supplemented complete RPMI. 489 Viral replication was measured in terms of p24 production in the culture supernatants by means of enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (XpressBio). In some experiments co-cultures were done in thepresence of rapamycin (1 nM, Sigma Aldrich ).

492

493 For viral suppression assays with CD8+ T-cell subsets, CD4+ and CD8+ T-cells were isolated and 494 cultured as described above. The day of infection, CD8+ T-cells were stained with anti-CD4 FITC (BD), 495 anti-CCR7 PE-Cy7 (eBioscience), anti-CD27-PE (BD) and anti-CD45RA v421 (BD) antibodies. CD8+ T-496 cell subsets were isolated with a FACSAria III cell sorter (BD). CD8+ T-cell subsets were defined as 497 Naïve (CD4-CD45RA+,CCR7+,CD27+), Central Memory (CD4-CD45RA-,CCR7+,CD27+), Transitional 498 Memory (CD4-CD45RA-,CCR7-,CD27+) or Effector Memory (CD4-CD45RA-,CCR7-,CD27-). After 499 sorting, CD4+ T-cells were challenged with HIV-1 Bal and cultured alone or with the autologous CD8+ 500 T-cell subsets as described above.

501

# 502 Single-Cell Flow Cytometry-assisted Cell Sorting

503 For each individual twenty million PBMC were thawed and cultured overnight in complete RPMI with 504 20% FBS. CD8+ T-cells were then separated by magnetic bead sorting (negative selection, STEMCELL 505 Technologies) and stained with the LIVEDEAD Fixable Aqua Dead Cell Stain Kit (Thermo Ficher 506 Scientific), APC-conjugated dextramers (Immudex) and the following antibodies: anti-CD3 AF-700 507 (BD), CD8 APC-Cy7 (BD), CD45RA v421, CCR7 PE-Cy7 and CD27 PE. For each individual, viable Central 508 Memory CD8+ T-cells were single-cell-sorted (BD FACS ARIA SORP, Becton-Dickinson) in 96-well 509 plates containing the VILO Reaction Mix, SUPERase-In and NP40 (all from Thermo Ficher Scientific). 510 480 cells were sorted for each group of patients (1440 cells in total). Plates were snap-frozen and 511 stored at -80°C.

512

# 513 Single-Cell Gene Expression

Analysis of gene expression in single cells from the different individuals, in no particular order, was performed as follows. Plates containing sorted single cells were thawed on ice. RNA was denatured

at 65°C for 90 seconds and then snap-chilled on ice. An RT mix containing SuperScript Enzyme and T4 Gene 32 Protein was then added, followed by RT cycling (25°C: 5 min, 50°C: 30 min, 55°C: 25 min, 60°C: 5 min, 70°C: 10 min). Specific target amplification (STA) was performed by adding TaqMan PreAmp Master Mix, 96 Primers mix and EDTA to cDNA, followed by STA cycling (95°C: 10 min, 20 cycles of [96°C: 5 s, 60°C 4 min]). The sample was then treated with exonuclease I (New England Biolabs) (37°C: 30 min, 80°C: 15 min).

522

523 Sample pre-mix (SsoFast EvaGreen Supermix with Low ROX (Biorad), DNA Binding Dye (Fluidigm), 524 preamplified Exo 1-treated sample) and Assay mix (Assay Loading Reagent (Fluidigm), Delta Gene 525 primers (Fluidigm)) were loaded on a primed 96.96 Dynamic Array chip (Fluidigm). The chip was 526 transferred into a Biomark (Fluidigm) for thermocycling, and fluorescence was acquired with the GE 527 96×96 PCR+Melt v2 program. For quality control, amplification curves were validated with cDNA 528 from bulk CD8+ T-cells. Linear derivative mode baseline correction was applied. Gene expression 529 values are plotted as Log2Ex, where Log2Ex = LoD – Ct if Ct  $\leq$  LoD (Log2Ex = 0 if Ct > LoD), with LoD = 530 limit of detection (24) and Ct = threshold cycle. A list of genes with raw Ct values is shown in 531 Supplementary Data 1. Cells negative for CD8, GAPDH and ACTB gene expression were excluded from 532 the analysis.

533

#### 534 Statistical analyses

The differential gene expression analysis was performed using MAST (Model-based Analysis of Single Cell Transcriptomics) (v1.8.2) packages from R software (v3.5.1). This package is based on the hurdle model, a two-part generalized model for bimodal and/or zero-inflated single cell gene expression data, simultaneously modeling the rate of expression over the background of various transcripts and the positive expression mean <sup>63</sup>. Cells are considered as outliers and removed from the analysis if their total expression (in log2EX) or the number of genes they express are less than two scaled median absolute deviations (MAD) away from the median. The total numbers of cells after data filtration were as follows: 329 (HIV-controllers, strong responders), 348 (HIV-controllers, weak
responders) and 320 (cART-treated individuals).

544

545 The hurdle model was applied to each gene in order to detect differentially expressed genes 546 between the groups of interest (HIC [WR and SR], cART,). This model included the group and subject 547 variables as fixed effects, as well as the interaction between group and subject. The last two terms 548 were used to model the pairing between cells from the same subject. To test the difference in 549 expression for each gene, we defined vectors of contrasts and then applied likelihood ratio tests. We 550 obtained p-values that were adjusted according to the Benjamini and Hochberg procedure to control 551 the false discovery rate at  $5\%^{64}$ . To compare the *between inter-goup* and *intra-group* variance we 552 calculated the F-statistic using one-way ANOVA with Welch correction (v2.4-2).

553

554 For t-sne analyses<sup>65</sup> gene expression values (Log2EX, SR and cART groups) of all genes and samples 555 were used.

556

557 For additional statistical tests, Graphpad Prism software (GraphPad Software, Inc.) was used. Non 558 parametric Mann-Whitney test was used to compare metabolite uptake and mitochondria mass and 559 to compare the ratio between HIV-specific CD8+ T-cell TNFα responses in medium without and with 560 glucose, between HIV controllers and cART individuals. A non-parametric Wilcoxon paired test was 561 used to compare HIV-specific CD8+ T-cell responses in different conditions.

562

#### 563 Metabolite Uptake

Fresh PBMC were stained with anti-CD3 AF 700, anti-CD8 APC-Cy7, CD45RA BV421, CD27 PE, and
CCR7 PE-Cy7 (all from BD). Stained samples were then split into three parts and put into contact with
2-NBDG (2-(N-(7-Nitrobenz-2-oxa-1,3-diazol-4-yl)Amino)-2-Deoxyglucose) (150 μM, 30 min) for
glucose uptake measurement, BODIPY<sup>®</sup> 500/510 C1, C12 (4,4-Difluoro-5-Methyl-4-Bora-3a,4a-Diaza-

568 s-Indacene-3-Dodecanoic Acid) (5 μM, 5 min) for fatty acid uptake measurement, and MitoTracker 569 Green FM (100 nM, 45 min) (all from Thermo Fisher Scientific) for mitochondrial mass measurement 570 (see Supplementary figure 16 for gating strategy). To minimize technical variability, metabolite 571 uptake was compared to the uptake by cells from a reference non-infected individual always 572 analyzed in parallel in each experiment. Metabolite uptake was thus expressed as the relative MFI for 573 cells from each individual when compared to the MFI observed in cells from the reference donor.

574

# 575 Phenotyping

576 We analyzed by flow cytometry the expression of CCL3, FASL and GZB as markers of antiviral 577 potential, pS6 and pAKT as markers of mTORC1 and mTORC2 activation respectively, and HIF1, 578 (Supplementary Figure 7). Purified PBMC were thawed and rested overnight at 37°C in RPMI medium 579 (RPMI 1640 supplemented with L-glutamine and antibiotics) with 20% heat-inactivated FCS. For cell 580 phenotyping, CD8+ T-cells were separated by magnetic bead sorting (negative selection, STEMCELL 581 Technologies) and stained with the LIVEDEAD Fixable Aqua Dead Cell Stain Kit (Thermo Fischer 582 Scientific), APC-conjugated dextramers (Immudex) and the following antibodies: anti-PD1 BV785, 583 CD45RA BV655, CCR7 Qdot605, CD8 BUV496, CD3 BUV395, CD27 PerCP-Cv5.5 (all from BD 584 Bioscience) and FASL PE-Cy7 (Miltenyi Biotech). Cells were then incubated with PhosFlow Fix buffer, 585 washed with Phosflow Perm-Wash Buffer and stained with anti- CCL3 APC-Cy7 (Miltenyi Biotech), 586 Granzyme B PE-TR BD Bioscience, HIF1a PE (Biolegend), Pospho AKT FITC and pS6 PacBlue/BV421 587 (both from Cell Signaling). Due to the rarity of HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells, the number of events 588 that we could analyze was limited and we could not find significant levels in the expression of CCL3, 589 FASL, pAKT or pS6 in HIV-specific CD8+ TCM-cells ex vivo to allow comparison between cells from HIC 590 and cART individuals. Results for GrZB and HIF1 are depicted in Figure 6.

591

# 592 Intracellular Cytokine Assay

593 Purified PBMC were thawed and rested overnight at 37°C in RPMI medium (RPMI 1640 594 supplemented with L-glutamine and antibiotics) with 20% heat-inactivated FCS. For the "No Glucose" 595 condition, cells were rested and stimulated in RPMI without glucose. Cells were then incubated with 596 overlapping peptide pools encompassing HIV-1 consensus subtype B Gag or HCMV pp65 (both 597 obtained through the NIH AIDS Reagent Program, Division of AIDS, NIAID, NIH, cat #12425 and 598 #11549) (2  $\mu$ g/ml). Anti-CD28/anti-CD49d co-stimulation (1  $\mu$ L/mL) and the anti-CD107 $\alpha$  marker 599 were used in each condition. Phorbol myristate acetate (80 ng/mL) together with ionomycin (1 600  $\mu$ g/mL; Sigma-Aldrich) was used as positive control. Golgi stop (1  $\mu$ g/mL; BD Biosciences) and 601 Brefeldin A (10 μg/mL; Sigma-Aldrich) were added 30 min after the start of all incubations. Cells were 602 then stained with the LIVE/DEAD Fixable Aqua Dead Cell Stain kit (Thermo Fisher Scientific), and with 603 anti-CD3 and anti-CD8 antibodies. BD Cytofix/Cytoperm<sup>™</sup> (BD Biosciences) was used for cell 604 permeabilization prior to staining for intracellular markers. Intracellular staining used anti-IFNy, anti-605 IL-2 and anti-TNF $\alpha$  (see Supplementary Figure 17 for gating strategy). In some experiments cells were 606 fixed with permeabilized with Phosflow fix/perm buffers (BD Bioscience) and cells were stained for 607 intracellular IFNy, TNF $\alpha$ , pS6 and pAKT as above. Menadione sodium bisulfite (Sigma-Aldrich) was 608 used at 5  $\mu$ M.

609

# 610 Measurement of oxygen consumption rate

611 Oxygen consumption rate (OCR) and extracellular acidification rate (ECAR) were measured using a 612 Seahorse XF96 metabolic analyser as indicated by the manufacturer (Seahorse XF Technology, 613 Agilent). CD8+ T-cells ( $2 \times 10^5$  cells per well) were seeded on XF96 plates (Agilent Seahorse) pre-614 coated with 0.5 mg/ml Cell Tack (Corning). Cells were incubated for 50 min in a CO2-free incubator at 615 37°C before loading the plate in the Seahorse analyser. Oligomycin (2.5  $\mu$ M), FCCP (0.9  $\mu$ M) 4) and 616 Rotenone/antimycin A (1  $\mu$ M each) were sequentially added to the cells and OCR was monitored 617 overtime. The maximal respiratory capacity is calculated as the OCR after FCCP addition subtracted 618 the OCR after oligomycin. For glycolysis (ECAR), cells were cultured in the absence of glucose and then XFmedia, glucose (10 mM), oligomycin (2.65 μM), and 2-DG (100 mM)) were sequentially added
to the cells.

621

In some experiments OCR and ECAR were analyzed in CD8+ T-cells from HIC after co-culture with HIV-infected or non-infected autologous CD4+ T-cells. Briefly, CD4+ T-cells from HIC were or not infected in vitro with HIV-1 BaL as described above. After three days, cells were washed and autologous CD8+ T-cells were added to the cultures of non-infected and infected CD4+ T-cells at a 1:1 ratio. Four days later, CD8+ T-cells were isolated again from the co-culture (flow sorted based on viability and expression of CD8) and their metabolic activity analyzed with the Seahorse XF96 analyser.

629

#### 630 Studies with cells from SIVmac251 infected Cynomolgus macaques

631 Adult male cynomolgus macaques (Macaca fascicularis) were imported from Mauritius and housed 632 in the facilities of the "Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique et aux Energies Alternatives" (CEA, 633 Fontenay-aux-Roses, France). All animals studied here were part of the ANRS SIC and ANRS 634 pVISCONTI studies and were inoculated (viral doses ranging from 5 to 1000 AID<sub>50</sub>) with the same 635 batch of uncloned SIVmac251 (provided by A. M. Aubertin, Université Louis Pasteur, Strasbourg, 636 France). Cells used were obtained during necropsies of animals at the chronic phase of infection 637 (between 8 and 18 months post-infection). Peripheral blood was collected by venous puncture into 638 BD Vacutainer Plus Plastic K3EDTA tubes or BD Vacutainer CPT Mononuclear Cell Preparation Tube -639 Sodium Heparin (BD Biosciences). Spleen and lymph nodes were processed by mechanical disruption 640 in RPMI media using a GentleMACS dissociator (Miltenyi Biotech), followed by gradient in 641 Lymphocyte separation medium and red cell lysis.

642

643 Viral load

644 Plasma viremia was determined using quantitative real time PCR with sensitivity of 12.3 copies/mL. 645 Viral RNA was prepared from 100  $\mu$ l of cell-free plasma, using the NucleoSpin 96 Virus core kit 646 (Macherey-Nagel SARL, Hoerdt, France) under vacuum, according to the manufacturer's instructions. 647 RNA was eluted in 100  $\mu$ l of nuclease-free water and frozen immediately at -80°C until analysis. 648 SIVmac251 virus diluted in and EDTA-treated plasma samples from macagues not infected with SIV 649 was used to generate a standard curve (serial 10-fold dilutions). Three titrated SIVmac251-infected 650 EDTA-treated plasma samples and two EDTA-treated plasma samples from SIV-negative macaques 651 were used as positive and negative reverse transcription-PCR controls, respectively. Standards, 652 controls, and viral RNA samples were extracted and tested in parallel under the same conditions. The 653 SIVmac251 gag cDNA sequence, ligated into the plasmid pCR2-TOPO (Invitrogen), was used as a 654 positive control for PCR.

655

656 Quantitative RT-PCR was performed with a SuperScript III Platinum One-Step gRT-PCR Kit 657 (Thermofisher) in a CFX96 Touch Real-Time PCR Detection System (BioRad) under the following 658 conditions: 12.5 µl of 2X reaction mixture, 0.5 µl of RNaseOUT (40U/µl), 0.5 µl of Superscript III 659 reverse transcriptase/Platinum, Taq DNA Polymerase, 1  $\mu$ l of each primer (125  $\mu$ M), 0.5  $\mu$ l of the 660 fluorogenic probe (135  $\mu$ M), and 10- $\mu$ l of RNA elution samples. The probe and primers were designed 661 to amplify a region of SIVmac251 gag<sup>66</sup>. Forward primer was 5'-GCAGAGGAGGAAATTACCCAGTAC-3' 662 (24 bp) and reverse primer was 5'-CAATTTTACCCAGGCATTTAATGTT-3' (25 bp). The TaqMan probe 663 sequence was 5'-FAM-TGTCCACCTGCCATTAAGCCCGA-BHQ1-3' (23 bp). This probe had a fluorescent 664 reporter dye, FAM (6-carboxyfluorescein), attached to its 5' end and the guencher BHQ1 (Black Hole 665 Quencher 1) attached to its 3' end. Samples were heated for 30 min at 56°C and 5 min at 95°C, 666 followed by 50 cycles of 95°C for 15 s and 60°C for 1 min.

667

668 Intracellular cytokine staining

669 Splenocytes were thawed, resuspended at  $1 \times 10^6$ /mL in R20 media and kept at 37°C overnight. Cells 670 were then stimulated with 2  $\mu$ g/mL of SIV peptide pools in the presence of costimulatory monoclonal 671 antibodies anti-CD28 (clone L293) and anti-CD49d (clone 9F10) at 1 µg/mL and stained with anti-672 CD107a for 30 minutes. Golgi Stop (BD Biosciences) and brefeldin A (BFA, 5 µg/mL; Sigma) were then 673 added. A pool containing 24 optimal peptides (ProImmune) was used to assess SIV-specific CD8+ T 674 cell responses. Co-stimulatory antibodies + Golgi Stop + BFA alone were used as a negative control. 675 Cells were incubated for a total of 6 hours and stained to assess cytokine production by SIV-specific 676 cells. After washing, cells were surface stained with anti-CD3, CD4 and CD8 antibodies. Cells were 677 then permeabilized (Cytofix/CytoPerm kit; BD Biosciences) and stained for IFNg, TNFa, IL-2 and 678 Perforin. The following antibodies were used: CD107a – V450 (clone H4A3, BD), CD3 – AF700 (clone 679 SP34-2, BD), CD4 – PerCP Cy5.5 (clone L200, BD), CD8a – APC-Cy7 (clone RPA-T8, BD), IFNg – PE-Cy7 680 (clone B27, BD), IL-2 – PE (clone MQ1-17H12, BD), TNFa – PE-CF594 (clone Mab11, BD) and Perforin – 681 FITC (clone Pf-344, Mabtech). Flow cytometry was performed with an LSRII instrument (BD 682 Biosciences), and data were analyzed with FlowJo V.10 software (TreeStar Inc.).

683

#### 684 CD8 T cell suppression assay

685 CD4+ and CD8+ T cells were purified from PBMCs or tissues cell suspensions with antibody-coated 686 magnetic beads in a Robosep instrument (Stemcell Technologies). Custom non-human primate 687 selection kits (Stemcell Technologies) were used to purify CD4+ T-cells (positive selection) and CD8+ T 688 cells (negative selection). The capacity of CD8+ T cells to suppress SIV infection of autologous CD4+ T 689 cells<sup>67</sup> was adapted from the assay with human cells described above. CD4+ cells were stimulated for 690 3 days with 5µg/mL Concanavalin A (ConA) in the presence of IL-2 (Miltenyi Biotec) at 100 IU/mL. 691 CD8+ T cells were kept in culture in the absence of any mitogen or cytokine or pre-incubated with IL-692 15. CD4+ T cells were then superinfected with SIVmac<sub>251</sub> (MOI =  $10^{-3}$ ) in the presence or absence of 693 CD8+ T cells (ratio CD4:CD8 of 1:1). Cells were cultured for 14 days in R10 medium containing IL-2 694 (100 IU/mL). Viral replication was monitored by p27 detection in culture supernatants (XpressBio) at695 day 7.

696

697 *Ethics statement* 

Non-human primates (NHP, which includes *M. fascicularis*) are used at the CEA in accordance with French national regulations and under the supervision of national veterinary inspectors (CEA Permit Number A 92-032-02). The CEA complies with the Standards for Human Care and Use of Laboratory Animals of the Office for Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW, USA) under OLAW Assurance number #A5826-01. All experimental procedures were conducted according to European Directive 2010/63 (recommendation number 9) on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes and national regulations.

705

706 The SIC and pVISCONTI studies were accredited under statement number 13–005, by the ethics 707 committee "Comité d'Ethique en Expérimentation Animale du CEA" registered and authorized under 708 numbers 01114.01 and 2453-2015102713323361v2 by the French Ministry of Education and 709 Research. The animals were used under the supervision of the veterinarians in charge of the animal 710 facility and were housed under controlled conditions of humidity, temperature, and light (12-hour 711 light/12-hour dark cycles). Water was available ad libitum. Animals were monitored and fed 712 commercial monkey chow and fruit 1-2 times daily by trained personnel. The macaques 713 were provided with environmental enrichment, including toys, novel foodstuffs, and music, under 714 the supervision of the CEA Animal Welfare Body.

715

Animals were sedated by intra-muscular injection of 10 mg/kg ketamine (Rhone-Merieux, Lyon, euthanized by intravenous injection of sodium pentobarbital (200 mg/Kg) and tissue samples were immediately collected during autopsia.

719

- 720 **Reporting Summary**
- 721 Further information on research design is available in the Nature Research Reporting Summary linked
- to this article.
- 723

# 724 **DATA AVAILABILITY**

- All data generated or analyzed during this study are available from the corresponding author upon
- request. Gene expression data are included in this article and its supplementary information files..

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#### 747 AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

M.A., C.P., C.L., V.M., JCV-C, performed experiments; M.A., S.V., M-A.D., and A.S-C. analyzed the data; L.W., C.G., L.M., F.B. and O.L. contributed to inclusion of study participants, obtaining and validation of clinical information; C.P., B.V., R.L.G. and AS-C contributed to the design and development of the macaque study; G.P., MM-T, O.L. and AS-C contributed to the conception of the study; M.A., O.L. and AS-C designed the study; M.A. and AS-C drafted the article; all authors critically reviewed the manuscript.

# **COMPETING FINANCIAL INTERESTS**

755 The authors declare no competing financial interests

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## 959 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

960 Figure 1

961 a) Representative examples of viral suppression assays, as previously shown<sup>8,18</sup>. Gag p24 962 concentrations in supernatants from HIV-infected CD4+ T cells alone (green squares and lines) and 963 CD4+/CD8+ T cell co-cultures (orange triangles and lines), using cells isolated from an HIV controller 964 (left) and an antiretroviral-treated individual (right) on different days of culture after HIV challenge. 965 0.1 ng/ml is considered as the lower limit of detection in our p24 ELISA. Data are means and standard 966 deviation of three replicates. b) Gag p24 concentrations in supernatants from HIV-infected CD4+ T 967 cells alone (green column) isolated from an HIV controller (top) or a cART-individual (bottom), in co-968 culture with bulk or flow-cytometry-sorted CD8+ T cell subsets on day 7 post-challenge (orange 969 columns; N: Naïve, CM: Central Memory, TM: Transitional Memory, EM: Effector Memory). Mean 970 and values for 3 replicates are shown. Representative results of independent experiments with cells 971 from 3 HIV controllers and 3 cART-individuals. c) Median percentage CD38/HLADR activation marker 972 expression by flow-sorted HIV-specific viable central memory CD8+ T cells isolated from HIV 973 controllers (n=5 individuals) and cART (n=5 individuals). d) T-sne analyses of gene expression by flow-974 sorted HIV-specific central memory CD8+ T cells from HIV controllers (red circles) (n=329 cells) and 975 cART individuals (blue circles) (n=320 cells).

976

#### 977 **Figure 2**

Differentially expressed genes linked to CD8+ T cells effector functions in HIV-specific central memory CD8+ T cells from HIV controllers (red) and cART individuals (blue). Violin plots represent gene expression as Log2ex (limit of detection – threshold cycle) for each cell after data filtration. Cells negative for CD8, GAPDH and ACTB or considered as outliers (if their total expression (in log2EX) or the number of genes they express are less than two scaled median absolute deviations away from the median) were excluded from the analyses. Values for each single cell analyzed (n=329 cells for 984 HIC, and n=320 cells for cART) are represented as scatter dots. The width of the plots represents the 985 kernel probability density of events at each given value. The proportion of cells lacking expression of 986 a gene is represented by the wideness of the base of the violin plots. The hurdle model was applied 987 to each gene in order to detect differentially expressed genes between cells from HIC and cART 988 individuals. For all genes depicted a statistical significant difference (p<0.05 after adjustment 989 according to the Benjamini and Hochberg procedure to control the false discovery rate at 5%) in 990 either continuous, discrete or hurdle analyses was found. Red or blue color of the P values indicate 991 higher expression in cells from HIC or cART individuals respectively.

992

993 **Figure 3** 

994 Genes differentially expressed by HIV-specific central memory CD8+ T cells from HIV controllers (red) 995 and cART individuals (blue). Violin plots represent gene expression as Log2ex (limit of detection -996 threshold cycle) for each cell after data filtration. Cells negative for CD8, GAPDH and ACTB or 997 considered as outliers (if their total expression (in log2EX) or the number of genes they express are 998 less than two scaled median absolute deviations away from the median) were excluded from the 999 analyses. Values for each single cell analyzed (n=329 cells for HIC, and n=320 cells for cART) are 1000 represented as scatter dots. The width of the plots represents the kernel probability density of 1001 events at each given value. The proportion of cells lacking expression of a gene is represented by the 1002 wideness of the base of the violin plots. The hurdle model was applied to each gene in order to 1003 detect differentially expressed genes between cells from HIC and cART individuals. For all genes 1004 depicted a statistical significant difference (p<0.05 after adjustment according to the Benjamini and 1005 Hochberg procedure to control the false discovery rate at 5%) in either continuous, discrete or hurdle 1006 analyses was found. Red or blue colors of the P values indicate higher expression in cells from HIC or 1007 cART individuals respectively. (A) Genes upreglated in cells from cART individuals. (B) Genes 1008 upregulated in cells from HIV controllers.

1009

A) Gene expression t-SNE plots. The first plot (top left) shows single cells from HIV controllers (n=329 cells) (red) and cART (n=320 cells) (blue) individuals. The remaining dot plots are colored on the basis of gene expression values. Groups of neighbor cells identified by the t-sne analysis enriched (>90%) in cells from HIV controllers (red) and cART individuals (blue) are indicated for visual reference. B) Heat map of genes differentially expressed (filtered based on the coefficient of the hurdle analysis) in cells from HIV controllers (red) and cART individuals (blue). Cells are ordered based on the first axis of the t-sne analyses.

1018

1019 Figure 5

1020 (a) T-sne analysis of gene expression by cells from HIC strong responders (n=329 cells) (red), HIC 1021 weak responders (n=348 cells) (green) and cART individuals (n=320 cells) (blue). (b-d) Genes 1022 differentially expressed by HIV-specific central memory CD8+ T cells from HIV controllers (strong 1023 (red) and weak (orange) responders) and cART individuals (blue). Violin plots represent gene 1024 expression as Log2ex (limit of detection - threshold cycle) for each cell after data filtration. Cells 1025 negative for CD8, GAPDH and ACTB or considered as outliers (if their total expression (in log2EX) or 1026 the number of genes they express are less than two scaled median absolute deviations away from 1027 the median) were excluded from the analyses. Values for each single cell analyzed (n=329 cells for 1028 HIC SR, n=348 cells for HIC WR and n=320 cells for cART) are represented as scatter dots. The width 1029 of the plots represents the kernel probability density of events at each given value. The proportion of 1030 cells lacking expression of a gene is represented by the wideness of the base of the violin plots. The 1031 hurdle model was applied to each gene in order to detect differentially expressed genes between 1032 cells from HIC SR, WR and cART individuals. For all genes depicted a statistical significant difference 1033 (p<0.05 after adjustment according to the Benjamini and Hochberg procedure to control the false 1034 discovery rate at 5%) in either continuous, discrete or hurdle analyses was found. Genes upregulated in cells from HIC WR are in orange, genes upregulated in cells from HIC WR are in red; genesupregulated in cells from cART individuals are in blue.

1037

1038 Figure 6

1039 A) Percentage of cells carrying high levels of GrZB (left) and expression levels (median fluorescence 1040 intensity, MFI) of HIF1a among HIV-specific CD8+ T CM cells from HIC (n=10 individuals) and cART 1041 (n=7 individuals) as determined by flow cytometry. B) Flow cytometry analyses of fatty acid (BODIPY) 1042 and glucose (NBDG) uptake by central memory CD8+ T cells from cART (blue circles, n=11 individuals) 1043 and HIV controllers (red circles, n=10 individuals). Results are expressed as the relative MFI 1044 compared to the MFI (set as 100) obtained with reference cells from a non-infected donor, which 1045 were analyzed in parallel for each experiment. The ratio of fatty acid vs glucose uptake for each 1046 individuals is also shown (right panel). (A,B) A non-parametric two-tailed Mann-Whitney test was 1047 used to compare differences between the groups. Each symbol represents values for cells from one 1048 individual. Medians are represented as horizontal lines.

1049

1050 **Figure 7** 

1051 a) TNF $\alpha$  production and total response (sum of TNF $\alpha$ , IFNy, CD107a and IL2 production) by HIV-1052 specific CD8+ T cells from HIV controllers (n=11 individuals, red symbols) and cART (n=8 individuals, 1053 blue symbols, [two individuals, 670115 and 350108, did not show TNFa responses above background 1054 in any conditions]) against a pool of HIV-Gag peptides in control medium, in medium without glucose 1055 and in the presence of menadione. The ratio "without/with glucose" represents the ratio between 1056 HIV-specific CD8+ T cell TNFa responses in medium without and with glucose, for HIC controllers (red 1057 symbols) and cART individuals (blue symbols), (b) Polyfunctional responses (3 or 4 functions; i.e. co-1058 expression of TNF $\alpha$ , IFN $\gamma$ , CD107a, or IL2) against a pool of HIV-Gag peptides by HIV-specific CD8+ T 1059 cells from HIV controllers (n=11 individuals, red symbols) and cART individuals (n=9 individuals, blue 1060 symbols, excluding 670115 with no Total HIV response) in control medium, in medium without 1061 glucose, and in the presence of menadione. (a,b) Each symbol represents values for cells from one 1062 individual. Medians are represented as horizontal lines. A non-parametric two-tailed Wilcoxon 1063 paired test was used to compare HIV-specific CD8+ T-cell responses in different conditions to the 1064 control condition. (c) Donut plots representing the relative magnitude (represented by the size) 1065 compared to control condition and polyfunctionality (Blue: 1 function; red: 2 functions; green: 3 1066 functions; yellow: 4 functions) of HIV-specific CD8+ T cells from HIV controllers (n=11 individuals) and 1067 cART individuals (n=9 individuals, excluding 670115 with no Total HIV response) in control medium, 1068 in medium without glucose, and in the presence of menadione.

1069

1070 Figure 8

1071 a) Fatty acid (BODIPY) uptake (MFI) by central memory CD8+ T cells from cART individuals (blue 1072 circles, n=7 individuals) after 48-72h incubation in the absence (control) or in presence of IL-15 1073 [10ng/ml] (R&D). b) Oxygen consumption rates (two representative examples, means and standard 1074 deviation [n=3 replicates] at each time point are shown for each analysis, left), basal glycolysis and 1075 basal and maximal respiratory capacity (right, cells from n=8 individuals) by CD8+ T cells from cART-1076 individuals pre-incubated or not with IL-15. Arrows indicate the time of addition of Oligomycin, FCCP 1077 and Rotenone/antimycin. c) TNF production by HIV- and CMV-specific CD8+ T cells from cART (n=8 1078 individuals) upon stimulation with pools of HIV-Gag (left) and CMVp665 peptides (right) in control 1079 medium. Cells had been pre-incubated (overnight) or not with IL-15. d) Representative example (left) 1080 and summary (cells from n=10 individuals) of viral suppression assays showing the capacity of CD8+ T 1081 cells from cART-individual ex vivo or pretreated with IL-15 to block HIV-1 infection of autologous 1082 CD4+ T cells. Data are means (and standard deviation for bar plots) of three replicates. (a-d) Each 1083 symbol represents values for cells from one individual. Medians are represented as horizontal lines. A 1084 non-parametric two-tailed Wilcoxon paired test was used to compare HIV-specific CD8+ T-cell 1085 responses in different conditions to the control condition.

Figure 1



# FIGURE 2



















# FIGURE 3









CD8A

cART

p= 0.033

p= 0.067

p= 1

HIC





RICTOR

p= 0.051







RHOA





IL7R

p= 0.0002



EOMES





REPIN1

CART





HIC CART

Analysis



HIC

PRKCA

cART

CDC42

p= 1.26e-05

BAX

















HIC



Figure 4

a)



# FIGURE 5





SR

**Hurdle Analysis** 

9

6

3

0

WR vs cART

WR vs SR

PRF1

p= 4.35e-08

p= 0.0002



GZMB



IFNB1

TNF p= 0.014 p= 7.96e-07





p= 1.81e-16 p= 0.278



IL7R

SR TT WR

ID2

p= 0.002

p= 358

Hurdle Analysis RPS18 p= 3.29e-08 WR vs cART p= 0.357 WR vs SR

С



6 4 2 0

SR TT WR

**REPIN1** 

p= 0.017

p= 0.617





b)











